

CHAPTER – IV

Murshidabad District: A Bengal District in Transition

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1. Introduction

The history of Bengali Muslim society as traced is seen as static¹ and increasingly sterile reaffirmation of the ‘basic contradictions’ and ‘inherent ambiguities’ between true Islam and the Bengali reality. Bengali Muslim was portrayed as victims perpetually trapped in a dilemma of identity forever between their (irreconcilable) Bengaliness² and Muslimness. Rafiuddin Ahmed, in his enormously influential and learned study of the Bengali Muslims, actually insists that ‘a Bengali identity was in no way inconsistent with their faith in Islam’. Rafiuddin Ahmed writes that ‘Bengal, particularly the low lying districts of eastern and southern Bengal where Islam found most of its adherents has been a peasant society for the whole of her recorded history and agriculture has provided the foundations of the region’s distinctive³ culture. British historian Peter Hardy apprehends the fact that Bengali Muslim faced a crises⁴ as far their identity is concerned. Mainly the Bengali Muslims were converted Muslims, that is they were forced to embrace Islam but at the same time could not come out of their own Hindu culture, customs, idol worship which they practiced before this conversion. Hence they could not fully embrace Islam or its ideology (monotheism) or foreign language that is Urdu or Persian. Bengali masses were not proper Muslims because they failed to understand the true meaning of Islam. Amalendu De similarly characterized that Bengal has a trend of Sufi culture which exerted a very great influence on the life of the people of Bengal. The Sufis were of the opinion that “Islam was in dire need of reform and revival”. The Sufi saints preached the essence of Islamic religion without emphasizing its orthodox aspects. According to Roy⁵ the impact of Sufi culture was great in all over India and West Bengal and hence Indian or Bengali Muslims did not start with orthodox Islam so there was a great reverence for pirs or saints in Bengal and Bengali Muslims adopt this Sufi version of Islam and hence termed as atrap by the ashrafs.

Muslims of Murshidabad district were the tenants and their zamindars were mostly Hindus. They suffered all the more at the hands of the zamindars because the landlords were mostly absentees and left matters in the hands of the naibs (intermediaries between the landlord and the peasants) who were unscrupulous and tended to coerce the tenants. Hence the economic positions were not sound. Even in drought or famine relief measures were not given to these sufferers resulting in starvations of the rural masses. There was no other profession to adapt other than peasantry and the community suffered⁶ a lot. Apart from the peasants the weavers, porters suffered economic setback too. Inter caste marriages were

denied to the Bengali Muslims with the non-Bengali Muslims – so the bulk of the people were not prosperous and were beginning to feel pressure of a Hindu economic domination.

But major section of the Bengali speaking Muslim in the district took education from informal institutions like mosques. They still lacked in education⁷ because education at mosque was given at much later age than formal educational institutions like schools and colleges. Education at mosque was given at much late age to a student hence a Muslim boy entered school much later than a Hindu boy born at the same age. Bengali Muslims of the district often belong to low caste Hindus who were very poor and forced to embrace Islam that is they are converted Muslims. As because the economic conditions of the Muslim family were not sound so a Muslim boy left school earlier than a Hindu boy because their parents often could not pay for him to complete his education. The Muslims of Bengal were mainly poor belong to agrarian class and having low economic status in compare to a Hindu. The Hindu parents of affluent section often decided to give his son such an education which would help him to secure high place among the leaned members of his own community and help him to compete for offices of the government. Hindu student in compare to a Muslim received training in English and Mathematics in government runned public schools than a young Muslim in Madrassa who devote them in receiving excellences in studying Arabic. Hence the Muslim community in Bengal failed to persue an independent line of politics⁸ due to educational and economic backwardness. Due to superior position of the Hindus therefore the Muslims of Bengal could not depend on the majority. Linguistic difficulty, poverty and attraction towards education in theology of Islam and with the growth of reforming movements within the community - the Wahabi and the Feraizi movements⁹ drive the community into isolation and backwardness. Due to educational and economic backwardness the Bengali Muslims had failed to make their mark in the civil service in compare to the Hindus. No industrial development was markedly developed in the district resulted in huge sufferings of the Bengali Muslim which continued till in the present time. But the Muslims of this district became politically conscious with the advent of Muslim League leaders who wanted to play an active role in the politics of the district.

2. History of the District

Murshidabad a district of West Bengal in eastern India lies between 23⁰43' and 24.52' north latitude and 87⁰49' and 88.44' east longitude covering an area of 5.341km²(2,062 sq mile)¹⁰, and having a population 5.863m¹¹ is a densely populated district and the ninth most

populous district in India. Beharampur town is the head quarters of the district. The district of Murshidabad enjoys rich cultural heritage¹² which owed its origin due to the confluence of various religions, and linguistic crosscurrents within the main stream culture of the district. Though the district is located in Bengal, it has a rich tradition of Persian and latter Urdu literature which flourished there on account of the patronage given by the Muslim Nawabs. A look into the ancient history of the district reveals that the district was the capital city of Sasanka¹³, the great king of Gauda (comprising most of Bengal)) in the seventh century AD and perhaps that of Mahipala. During this time the district was a place of great cultural heritage. The origin of Murshidabad city can be traced back in the early years of the 18th century. According to Gulam Hossain Khan, author of Riyaz-us Salatin, a merchant named Makhsus Khan first improved the present site of Mushidabad¹⁴. Makhsus Khan has been mentioned in the Ain-i- Akbari as a nobleman who served in Bengal and Bihar during the last decades of the sixth century. He built a sarai or rest house at a market place which was called after him Makhsusabad or its variant Makhsudabad.

The district¹⁵ began to flourish from 1704 when Murshid Quli Khan, the Diwan of Bengal shifted the seat of Dewani administration from Dhaka to Makhsusabad. During Jahangir's reign the district became well known for silk and silk fabrics. Along with Kashimbazar it is one of the most important silk manufacturing centers in Bengal, and the district continued to grow in importance during the second half of the seventh century and eventually become an administrative station. Later on, Aurangzeb honored him the title of Murshid Quli Khan¹⁶ and granted permission to rename the town as Murshidabad in 1704 C.E after his newly acquired title. The city and the district flourished during the time of Murshid Quli Khan and became the centre of political economical and social life under the Nawabs of Bengal for nearly a century.

W.W Hunter stated, "It seems probable that Murshid Quli Khan took the decision of shifting the capital from Dhaka to Murshidabad by political consideration"¹⁷. Dacca has lost its importance for the Portuguese as a trade center and the banks of Bhagirathi afforded a more central position for the management of the three provinces of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa. Murshidabad rose from the position of a small market town to be the headquarters of Bengal. At the same time it was an important commercial centre. By the beginning of the 18th century the Murshidabad city gained importance for the development of silk trade centre in Qasimbazar. Places like Saidabad and Jangipur attracted many English, Dutch and the French traders. The commercial activities of the city led to the increase of the wealth of

Murshidabad. The house of the Jagat Seth performed the most important financial transactions of the Government of Bengal and through this banking house the Nawabs of Bengal¹⁸ remitted the annual revenue to the Mughal court and gradually the district gained political importance.

2.1 Demography of the District

Geography

The eastern side of the district is bounded by the river Padma and on the south lays the district of Burdwan and Nadia. The South eastern part of this district is bounded by the Jalangi River, which also separates the district from Nadia. To the west lie the districts of Birbhum and the Santhal parganas. The Bhagirathi flows from the north to the south of the district. It divides the district into two equal parts¹⁹. The tract to the west of the river is locally known as Rarh and the tract east of the river is known as Bagri. When the rain water erodes, this area becomes a pasture land and it produces thatching grasses. The Bagri or eastern tract resembles the ordinary alluvial plains of Bengal. It is subjected to inundation and lies entirely between the Bhagirathi and the Jalangi River. The composition of the people of these two regions also differed. In every Thana in the eastern tract except Gorabazar, Sujaganj, Manullabazar and Burdwan the majority of population belongs to the Muslim community and in every portion of the western tract the Hindus outnumbered the Mohammedans²⁰.

Industry, Agriculture and Tourism

There are some silk farms and some weaving machines, but they are losing out fast against the modern industries. Murshidabad is famous for the production of high quality silk. Beedi industry is also there. Many of the India's major beedi companies are from this district. Bell metal and brass utensils are manufactured in large quantities at Khagra, Berhampore, Kandi, Barangar and Jangipur. The District is having the largest Power Plant at Sagardeghi, Central Power Plant at Farakka NTPC which generates 1600 Mega Watt power. Iron and steel manufacturing company and house hold Plastic goods are produced in ample in Jangipur division of the district. The skill of gifted craftsmen can be seen in the district markets. Ivory carving has been patronized from the Nawabs time and about 99% of total production of ivory is exported which draws a significant amount of Murshidabad's income. Sandalwood etching has become more popular than ivory carving now. Murshidabad is

famous for brass and bell metal ware also. Silk weaving industry constituted to be the principal cottage industry in the district. The brand “Murshidabad Silk” is not only famous across India, but also has a great demand throughout the world. Sericulture industry is the principal agro-based rural industry in Murshidabad. Most of the people depend on agriculture for their livelihoods. Rice, Jute, legumes, oilseeds, wheat, barley and mangoes are the chief crops in the east; extensive mulberry cultivation is carried out in the west.

The town still bears memories of the Nawabs with several mosques, tombs and gardens. The district is also famous for the historical place²¹ which attracts millions of tourists from overall India. The remarkable places were Nimtita Rajbari (Zamidar house), Murshidabad New Palace, constructed during the reign of Wasif Ali Mirza, Murshidabad, Nawab Palace Hazarduary by Humayunjah on the site old fort (Killa Nazamat), Chawk Mosque by Moni Begum (Chawk Bazar), Murshidabad Imambara by Sirajuddowlla though caught fire in 1846 and rebuilt in 1848 by Feraidunjah, Katgola Jain Pareshnath temple constructed by Lachmipat Sing Dugar, Nashibpur Rajbari, House of Jagat Seth, Jufraganj Gate of Mirjafar House, Jufraganj Cementry of Mirjafar and his family, Tomb of Azimunnessa Begum, daughter of Murshidkuli Khan, Murshidabad Katra Mosque built by Murshidkuli Khan who was burnt under its stairs in, Murshidabad jahankhosa, topkhana (house of heat), Motijhil and Motijhil Mosque, Footi Masjid, Khoshbagh Cementry of Nawab Sirajddowlla and Alibardi and his family. Other notable places of the district were Jagabandhu dham, Armenian Church, Dutch Cementry, Kasimbazar Rajbari and Kireteshawri mandir respectively. [See Photos – pp. 470-475]

Administrative Division

The district²² comprises five subdivisions; Barhampur, Domkal, Lalbag, Kandi and jangipur and twenty six blocks (7 Municipalities, 254 Gram Panchayats and 1937 villages in this district).

Population, Religion and Cultural Trend of the District

Among the Muslims of the district²³ almost 90% are Sunnis governed by the Hanafi law. Old and established Sunni families, claiming to have Jagirdari functions and Zamindari rights from medieval times are regarded as Ashrafs who are rich elite and belong to noble and propertied class of Muslims and are distinguished from the common masses of Muslim peasants and artisans converted into Islam from lower Hindu castes. But the largest number

of Muslims of the district are Sheikhs who mainly are peasants and artisans and regarded as Azlafs (or Atrap) or no gentry.

Murshidabad is the only district in West Bengal where the followers of Islam form the single largest religious community in the district. As of 2001 census report²⁴ Murshidabad district had a total population of 5,863, among which Muslim consists of 63.67%, Hindu consists of 35.92% and Christians consist of 0.23%. As per census 2011, the total population is 7102 lakh and the literacy rate is 63.88%. Murshidabad has a large concentration of minority population may be more than 66% of the total population. Among the total population of the district, 7102430, male population consist of 36, 29,595 and female population comprises 34, 72,835. Population density is 1334/square kilometer. As per as census report decadal growth varies 21.07%. It is an educationally backward district. As per as record shows male literacy rate is 61.25% and female literacy rate is 55.04% of the total population of the district.

In the India, some of the Sufi cult²⁵ came closely in the wake of Islam and brought a new mystic idealism. The district with its historical specificity, the trend of Sufi culture proved to be a unique example of establishing communal harmony in pre and post partition period. Even today; 'Majhar' festival²⁶ in Salar region of the district is an excellent example of Hindu Muslim unity. The grand celebrations of 'Bera Utsav' are conducted at Lalbagh. Hazarduari Mela is conducted by West Bengal Tourism Department along with the Murshidabad district administration. The Mela also includes songs of Bauls and Fakirs of the district. In this district we find a trend of cultural diversity - a district identified as multilingual, multicultural and multi religious society.

Inspired by the Wahabi movement of Arabia some Muslim theologians like Shariat-ullah and Saiyad Ahmad around 1818-1847, launched a puritanical movement²⁷ in India known as Tariqua-i- Mohammadiya to restore Islamic beliefs and practices. According to them, Hindusthan had become a Dar-ul-Harb²⁸ (country governed by alien infidels) under the Christian Britishers and Sikhs where the Muslims could not pursue their faiths in peace and had to live a dog's life without any liberty. They urged Muslims to quit from all non-Islamic beliefs and practices and return to the original purity of Islam. They preached that Islam stood for an egalitarian brotherhood of all Muslims. Their preaching's found good response among the masses of Muslim especially among the small peasantry, agricultural laborers, and artisans and small traders in the district. They began to believe that it was their

duty to return to the purity of original Islam in their beliefs and practices and fight the alien²⁹ infidel indigo planters and Hindu zamindars to overcome their economic and social distress to lead a pure Islamic life. From around 1818 to 1847, the Tariqua-i- Mohammadiya movement was directed mainly against the Sikhs in Punjab, although from 1827. Titumir had been organizing Muslim peasantry in twenty-four Parganas and Jessore against the Hindu Zamindars and English indigo planters. This influenced Enayat Ali in the district to organize religious gathering in the village of Narayanpur in Jangipur sub-division which created frenzy among the Muslims assembled there. But it was dead soon, with Tariqua-i- Mohammadiya as well as Titumir's Faraidi movement were dead by 1870, but it made Muslims conscious of their separate identity and made them conscious of their duty to fight for the establishment of Muslim identity. Together we find the emergence of Brahmonism³⁰ as a social reform movement among the literate white collared Hindu professions in Murshidabad, Qasimbazar and Azimganj for the revival of Hindu traditional society.

The Indigo rebellion in 1779³¹, in the district showed a different picture. By the Regulation VIII of 1819, the government allowed the Europeans' to take on Taluqdari – pattani lands from Indian Zamindars. In 1859 the cultivators all over Bengal and in Murshidabad too, refused to cultivate indigo and in this struggle both Hindu and Muslims (backed by the newly emergent urban white collar workers and professional middle class irrespective of their religious faith in the district) fought against Indigo plantation.

3. Participation of the People of the District in Freedom Struggle

The Muslim people of the district possessed a nationalistic feeling from the very beginning and they opposed to Bengal partition of 1905. The proposal of Bengal partition³² was opposed by the influential people of the district like Maharaja Manindra Chandra Nandy, Baikuntha Nath Sen, Ramdas Sen, Acharya Ramendra Sundar Trivedy, Brojo Bhusan Gupta, Durgapada Singh, Makshudal Hossain, Nalini Banerjee and other influential zamindars of the district. Maharaja Manindra Chandra Nandy organized a meeting in 7th August 1905 where he declared to boycott all foreign goods by the people of the district. Swadeshi Movement³³ was started by setting up National Industries like National Leather Manufacturing Company, National Soap Factory, National Handloom Factory and Banga Lakshmi Cotton Mill by Manindra Chandra Nandy in the district. Many people began to spin threads by 'charka' in their own hands and then clothes were manufactured with the help of local weavers. The influential people of the district, the zamindars, ordinary people

and students from all community joined in this movement. Ramendra Sundar Trivedy through his writings like 'Banga Lakshmir Broto Katha' stirred the sentiments of the Bengali people against partition of Bengal in 1905.

Gandhi's Non-Violent³⁴ and Civil Disobedience Movement influenced the District Congress Committee to organize protest in the district. Under the leadership of Brojo Bhusan Gupta Civil Disobedience movement was launched where the youths of the district adopted the path of violent revolutionary activities for the liberation of their motherland. Brojo Bhusan Gupta was a Gandhite and led the entire Non-Cooperation movement³⁵ in the district. With the volunteers of the movement like Rejaul Karim, Brojo Bhusan Gupta established National Schools named as 'Karma Kuthir', to organize political campaigns in the district to fight for boycott of foreign goods, liquor and prostitution and to draw the attention of the common people. A Gandhi Ashram was constructed at Dhulian. Movements were launched in several parts of the district under the leadership of Durga Pada Singh, Makshudal Hossain, and Nalini Banerjee for non-payment of government taxes, they started picketing before excise shops and shops selling foreign goods. But the Khadi centres³⁶ of Mirzapur, Kanchantala and other places of the district were ransacked and looted by the British police and some influential leaders were also arrested to stop the movement in the district.

In connection to August Movement of 1942³⁷ violent incidents happened in various places of the district such as attacks on Beldanga Railway station and post office by cutting telegraph wires, damaging an engine and blocking the track, some youths and students looted post office, rice mill were looted in Jiaganj and the terrorist set fire to the relief camps in Beldanga and Jiaganj. In Murshidabad, Quit India Movement started immediately after the people heard the news of the arrests of Mahatma Gandhi and other Congress leaders. In 1942, some students of different educational institutions of Berhampore rushed into the court of the District Judge and tried to create dead lock by obstructing the normal activities of the court where the trial of the arrested participators of the Quit India Movement was going on. S.P Pollard with his police force rushed to the spot and arrested number of students and took them to the District Intelligence Branch Office. In 1943 a very daring mail robbery was committed near the village of Mohammadpur within Bhagwangola, but police failed to arrest any person. The people of the district of Murshidabad continued their fight against the British and intensified their political activities in the period from 1943-1947. The District Congress Committee organized a Literacy Conference at

Berhampore in 1945 and a large number of persons from different parts of and outside the district attended the conference. The conference aimed in shaping the nationalism and patriotism among the people. 'Siraj Day' was observe in 'Kishor Pathagar', in Berhampore³⁸, in 1945 as a symbol of freedom to the people of not only Murshidabad but also of whole Bengal .

3.1 Nature of Politics in Pre-Partition Bengal in Murshidabad

It has been stated by Sen Shila³⁹ that the study of Muslim politics in Bengal can be studied on the basis of three factors. Firstly, the majority community (Muslim) in Bengal was economically, socially and politically backward in relation to the majority community. This generated a feeling among Muslims that they were economically exploited, culturally subjugated and politically dominated by the Hindus. Hence a search for a separate identity began among the former. Secondly the position of the majority of Muslims was not strong enough to pursue an independent line of politics because the two communities were almost evenly matched in numbers. The slight advantage the Muslim population enjoyed over Hindus was more than counter-balanced by the superior position of the latter in the economic, social and political life of the province. The emerging Muslim middle class found that all roads to its advancement blocked by Hindus and it had to search for new outlets. Therefore Muslims in Bengal could not depend on the majority and subjected to the pulls of the Indian political forces. Thirdly by the thirties of the present century Bengali Muslims had reached an advanced stage of political awakening and produced an articulate section which ventilated their grievances and asserted their rights. This section wanted to play an effective role in the life of the province, but could not fit into congress politics.

In Mursidabad according to Government record⁴⁰ of 1941, the percentage of Muslim population was 55.24% and Hindus was 44.60% and nine tenths of the total Muslim populations of Murshidabad were orthodox 'Sunni Muslim'⁴¹. Both these religious communities were represented by their conservative leaders who tried their best to enlarge their sphere of influence in Murshidabad. Most notable among them were Guru Golwalkar the leader of R.S.S of Berhampore and the Hindu revivalist leader Maharaja Manindra Chandra of Cossimbazar. Similarly The influence of the Nawab Bahadur of Murshidabad, who happened to be the leader of the; 'Sia' community opposed the orthodox Muslim league leaders and Muslim fundamentalists, and played an important role in shaping the social political life of the people in Murshidabad in the pre 1947 period.

Besides political leaders there is another significant group of people who are known as 'Bauls'⁴² scattered in various parts of Murshidabad whose religious views are very much akin to those of the 'Sufis' which created an impact in the socio cultural movements of Murshidabad. Over and above, Kazi Najrul Islam played a positive role in this respect. Since his release from Berhampore jail 1923 he often came and resided in the houses of some Hindu families for days together and maintained a close connection with the important political leaders of the District Congress. His patriotic and other songs and public speeches influenced the youths of Berhampore which acted as a battle against communalism, imperialism and casteism and had its profound impact on the socio- cultural and political life of Murshidabad.

3.2 Anti-Communal Instances in the District

Although the District Committee of the Muslim League was set up in 1927 in the district, yet communal activities in the district were not noticeable till the introduction of the 'Separate Electorate' in 1931. In Murshidabad both the Muslim league and the Hindu Mahasabha were formed during the late twenties⁴³. During the proposal of partition of Bengal in 1905 the students of Berhampore K.N. College under the Leadership of Abdul Ahamed Yusuf Jilani started agitation against the partition. It was in Murshidabad that the provincial conference of the All India Muslim league was held at Berhampore in 1937 and attracted the attention of the Press and was attended by Md. Ali Jinnah and other stalwarts of the Muslim league. Anti communal voices of Abdus Samad, Rejaul Karim and Wasif Ali Mirza motivated the people of the district to preserve communal harmony and they were not influenced much with the communal slogans of the Muslim League activist who tried to create gulf within the two community members.

Abdus Samad was a staunch nationalist and important leader of the Murshidabad District Congress Committee. As a Congress Legislator from Murshidabad, he sharply criticized and opposed the "Separate Electorate Bill"⁴⁴ in the greater interest of the common people of Bengal, both Hindus and Muslims. In his opinion this communal award was an imperialist weapon to weaken the freedom struggle with the help of 'divide and rule policy'. According to Samad communal representation by separate electorate could not be justified under any circumstances. It divided the two communities by separate water tight compartments and made out one community apathetic to the interests and welfare of the other. Under such an electorate a Muslim candidate seeking election should have to declare

that he was a Muslim first and Indian next. In another debate of the Bengal Legislative Council, Maulavi Abdus Samad said⁴⁵, “the interests of the two communities are inseparably interwoven, and one cannot do without the help and co-operation of another. The system of communal electorates has done them more harm than good, they know that it has alienated the sympathy of the Hindus towards the Muslims, and has brought in its train communal tension and communal riots in the district”.

According to Samad, not the separate electorate, but the much needed social reforms and educational progress among the Muslims including the emancipation of Muslim women were the dire necessity and that only could uphold the position and interests of millions of poor⁴⁶. He also criticized Dr. Ambedkar, as the, “so called representative of the depressed class Hindus who acted as one of the agents of the British government to run the divide and rule policy” within the community. As the nationalist Muslim, Abdus Samad appealed for the implementation of the joint electorate in the greater interests of all the communities. As Saamad opined, ‘the nationalist’⁴⁷ Muslims all over India who were the real representatives of the dumb millions of Muslim agriculturists, laborers and artisans should take initiative in securing the interest of the ordinary people. But unfortunately when Samad was opposing tooth and nail the forces of communalism, Sirish Chandra Nandy of Cossimbazar supported the proposal of separate electorate.

The tradition of communal harmony which was set up by Maulavi Abdus Samad was followed by his nephew professor Rejaul Karim, a staunch nationalist Muslim leader of Murshidabad and a devoted Gandhite who also set an example of relentless struggle for Hindu-Muslim unity and fought against the communal politics of the Muslim League since the 1930s. Professor Karim carried out his struggle to restore communal harmony not only in Murshidabad⁴⁸, but also throughout Bengal. He sincerely believed that it was the duty of all to remove communal feelings from their mind to achieve progress of the community as well as the welfare of India and hence he considered him as Indian. He was a true believer of Koran and uttered the famous teaching of the prophet Mohammed, “Habbul Watan, Minal Imam”, that is, nationalism is a part and parcel of Islam. He launched a ‘jihad’ against the reactionary Muslim League leaders and their opportunist policies who tried to distinguish between the two communities. He believed in uplifting a nation or a community by uniting the two communities and thus negated the concept of separate electorate for the Muslims. He was bitterly critical towards both the Hindu and Muslim communalists and as such was very much frustrated with the deliberations of the Round Table Conference that

served only the interests of the imperialist forces hence sharply opposed the fourteen points of Md. Ali Jinnah who himself was a communal man and tried to forge communal identity within the community members. After the Lucknow pact, he sharply criticized both Mahatma Gandhi and Md. Ali Jinnah in an article published in a Calcutta Daily. He criticized Gandhi for his policy of begging the rights of the Indians from the British government. So he said the welfare of the Muslim community would not be secured merely by increasing the number of voter's in the council. So he wrote⁴⁹, "As long as India is not ruled for her own interests, no community will be benefited. Muslims want freedom and rights and all the communities of India will achieve freedom and rights after achieving freedom". Hence communal award was a trap, and an alluring share to enmesh the Muslim community was fatal because it tried to suppress the dissent voice of protest of the community people. According to Karim's theory for the liberation of the country he pledged to adult franchise and joint free electorate, which would settle of communal problem. The communal award has given some preferences to the Muslims, but at the cost of their liberty, nationalism and responsible government. Karim's long drawn struggle against the forces of reaction and imperialism and his vocal voices in public meetings and in Bengali journals like Jugantar, Amritabazar Patrica as well in the local weeklies published from Berhampore, threw a challenge against the politicians of Muslim League and had its effect over the Muslim masses of Murshidabad. As a young Congress worker he and his other colleagues moved from village to village of Murshidabad and propagated the politics of non-violence, non-cooperation and communal harmony⁵⁰. He wrote a book known as 'Naya Bharater Bhitti' to strengthen it, but that could not win over the Muslim masses of Murshidabad from the clutches of Muslim League and as a result 'Separate Electorate' for the Muslim masses was implemented that ultimately led towards the partition of India in 1947.

To promote communal harmony Wasif Ali Mirza, the Nawab Bahadur of Murshidabad in 1937 formed an association⁵¹ in Murshidabad known as the 'Hindu-Muslim Unity Association' to remove vindictive attitude from the minds of the community people. A Unity Conference was summoned by him which was attended by thousands of common people of both the communities and addressed by the stalwarts like Soumendra Nath Tagore, Tulshi Goswami, and Humayun Kabir etc and presided over by the Nawab Bahadur himself. It was a memorable event in the history of the socio-political movements of Murshidabad. The open session of the conference was held in 1937 on vast ground in front of the 'Hazarduari Palace' and the Nawab Bahadur employed his entire administrative

machinery for campaigning in the district and asked all the noble persons of his estate to attend it and opened a large kitchen to accommodate them. A branch of the Hindu-Muslim Unity Association, which was formed in 1938 at Murshidabad, exercised a claiming effect in that district and leading gentlemen of both communities attended a meeting held at the Palace of the Nawab Bahadur with an aim to restore communal harmony in the district.

It has been mentioned by Dr. Amalendu De that as the socio-political condition of Bengal was not favorable, therefore, this Association had to face many difficulties and the Muslim League gave a stubborn resistance and the efforts of the Nawab Bahadur could not precede much. Dr. Amalendu De also observes that during the period 1937-41, the communal tension was intensified in Bengal. In 1941, when Mr. A.K.Fazlul Haque, became the chief minister of Bengal Nawab Bahadur of Murshidabad again took initiative and summoned a conference at Calcutta on 20th June, 1942. Mr. Haque further added that, “he was proud that he represented that section of the Muslim community who observed Islamic tenets; believed in Islamic teachings, who desired friendship with Hindu brethren, not for political purposes or personal ends, but to live in peace and amity. Hindus and Muslims must realize that they had got to live together, sink or swim together and if needed be, lay down their lives together for the good of their common motherland”.

Thus it is found that the political leadership given in the district was very positive in restoring communal harmony. Tragedy lies in the fact that when he was fighting against the forces of communalism, his son Kazem Ali Mirza proceeded in the opposite direction as the pivot of the District Muslim League; supported the Communal Award and advocated the justification of Pakistan and one of his cousins Mr. Iskandar Ali Mirza went to Pakistan and became the Prime Minister during 1950s. So in Murshidabad, both the forces of communalism and anti-communalism proceeded side by side during the pre-independence period.

3.3 Communal Activities in the District

Communal activities were carried out in the district by the League supporters to disrupt the minds of the Muslim people and to forge mistrust among them. The District Committee of Muslim League was very much powerful and Maulavi Abdul Bari, an advocate of Berhampore Bar and a member of the State legislature was the unchallenged leader of the Muslim League in Murshidabad and in 1937 he was elected as one of the Assistant Secretaries of the Provincial Muslim League. Amongst the other important Muslim League

leaders of this district, names of Kazem Ali Mirza, Farhad Murtaza Reza Choudhury, Imajuddin Biswas, Jahiruddin Biswas, Abdul Gani, Abdul Hamid, Shakwat Hossain Alkaderi etc are worth mentioning. Under the leadership of Shakwat Hossain and Abdul Bari, the District Committee of the Muslim League published a weekly newspaper from Berhampore known as 'Islam Jyoti' and carried on their communal propaganda⁵² throughout the district during 1932-37. The Muslim League leaders were the great supporters of the Britishers and they believe that their life, property, religion, honour and dignity would be secured from the Hindus by the British raj. The League leaders tried to remove the demoralizing effects on the community imposed by the Congress organization. Hence the Muslim League vociferously claimed to liberate the Mussalmans from the clutches of the Congress and the Hindus; though it did nothing to liberate them from the British imperialism. The leaders demanded separate electorate which would ensure justice to them and tried to motivate the Muslims to leave the Provincial and All India Congress Committee mainly dominated by the Hindus and Muslims belonging to the Jammat-i-Ulema. There was another Muslim organization in Murshidabad during that period, known as 'Murshidabad Mohammedan Association'⁵³ having its headquarter at Berhampore and Mr. Shakwat Hossain Alkaderi, a lawyer of Berhampore was its leader. This organization had similar views with the Leaguers. According to Abdul Bari⁵⁴ those who opposed to the Muslim League are branded as Kafirs that is enemies of Islam. The British government helped to strengthen the Muslim League in India as well as in Bengal and Murshidabad. The British government deliberately and most unjustifiably refused to take into account the opinions of large number of non-League Muslims who belong to the organizations like the Jammat-i- Ulema, the Nationalist Muslim Party, the Majlis -i- Ahrar, the members of the 'Shia' Conference and the Khudai Khidmatgars of the North-West Frontier Province. The Muslim League leaders published leaflets⁵⁵ consisted of cyclostyled slogan in Bengali language and circulated it throughout the district. The leaflet with 'Allahu-Akbar' on top and addressing 'Beradare Islam' says that the Muslims are in danger. The Muslims of the district should be determined to protest against the Congress proposal of the acceptance of Interim government from British. Seditious pamphlets were circulated in the district by the league activists entitled, 'Lar Ke Lenge Pakistan', that is "we will fight unto the last to achieve our dreamland Pakistan"⁵⁶. Hence the league leaders called all the young Muslims to form Muslim National Guard for the achievement of Pakistan. The league activists in the district declared that, "the British had oust our Nawab Sri-raj-duallah from Bengal but we will oust the Hindus from the district and to preserve again the rule of Allah in Murshidabad with the

creation of the new land Pakistan and Murshidabad will be united with it”⁵⁷. The League leaders of the district namely Moulavi Nurul Hasan, Umed Ullah, Jahiruddin Biswas, Saiyad Abdul Khan, Maniruddin Ahmed, Aminuddin Sheikh all declared, “Murshidabad is our sacred soil, the land of Nawabs and rich in Islamic culture, which we shall turn into Pakistan by our might”. The Muslim League leaders laid down programmes to guide Muslim masses and volunteers to organize camps to achieve their dreamland Pakistan. The Muslim League holds underground meetings to forge an intense communal feeling and hatred among the Muslims. The League activists smuggled lathis, knives, guns, revolvers to carry cold blooded slaughter of the people other than Muslim. They even destroyed Hindu properties, dislocated telegraph communications, destroyed the railway lines and other means of communications. They tried to eliminate the police force from the district to loot Hindu shops and properties. They formed a suicidal squad whose duty would be to murder Hindu ring leaders and non-League Muslims to establish their dreamland ‘Pakistan’.

Apart from the Muslim Leagues the Hindu communal forces were at work in order to create distance between the two communities in the district. Thus Hindu Communalist forces tried to create the gulf in the district. The notable Hindu Mahasabha leaders of the district were Maharaja Manindra Chandra Nandy, Maharaj Sirish Chandra Nandy, Sourindranath Roy, Gnyan Lahiri, Dhirendranath Roy, Radhanath Choudhury, Sisir Kumar Biswas, Bejoiyendra Narayan Roy, Sarat Chandra Ttivedy, Dwijapada Chatterjee, Kulada Charan Roy, Tulsi Majumdar, Asutosh Bhattacharya and Kanti Moitra. The leaders of Mahasabha⁵⁸ like Hom Kanti Maitra, Sourindra Nath Roy who attended the sabha defined the ‘sabha’ as a non-political organization which was established to re-mould the character, health and morals of the students in accordance with the doctrines of the Hindu Shastras. The leaflets entitled ‘Naba Banga’, ‘Hindu Jagriti’; of Hindu Mahasabha activists were circulated in the entire district through the student and other members of the sabha to rouse communal sentiment among the Hindus against the Muslims in the district.

In all the elections of the state Legislature since 1929, the Hindu Mahasabha contested in Murshidabad. Sometimes they supported independent Hindu candidates like Raibahadur Surendra Narayan Singha who had close associations with the Hindu Mahasabha. The strength of the Hindu Mahasabha was not negligible in Murshidabad and often it rose to the occasion and gave provocations to intensify communalism⁵⁹ to serve their vested interest. The sabha attempted to unite the educated and well-to do Hindus of Bengal, the rich rural landowning groups, the urban professional intelligentsia, with the

lower middle class sections of the 'bhadralok'. Attempts were made to recruit from the lower classes and so called 'depressed' or low castes into Hindu political parties. From the district as the representative of Hindu Mahasabha, Maharaja Manindra Chandra Roy and Srish Chandra Nandy of the Cossimbazar Raj attended the All India Hindu Mahasabha Conference held at Goya in 1915. His son Srish Chandra Nandy attended the Provincial Conference of the Hindu Mahasabha held at Burdwan in 1935-36 and All India Conference held at Amritsar in 1943.

The Hindu Mahasabha⁶⁰ leaders possessing a critical concept of Hindu-Muslim unity assumed that, the Hindus wanted freedom of India, and the only way for the Hindus was to unite, to grow strong and develop the will to live in India. Hence, Hindu-Muslim unity and its concept was an imaginary scheme and hence the proclamation of Hindu-Muslim unity was the cause of the weakness of the Hindus. The Mahasabha had been very active to organize demobilized soldiers to carry out the organisation's activities. The leaders of the district also tried to obtain arms and ammunitions, attempted to organize soldiers under the banner of the Mahasabha and also arranged military training of Hindu youths by ex-servicemen (like S.P.Mukherjee). The Mahasabha leaders always tried to create an 'Hindu' communal identity, by inculcating the images of Bengal's glorious past and claimed that partition would protect Bengal's unique 'culture' and would provide a secure 'Hindu Homeland'. In the context of the great Calcutta Killing of 1946, the Mahasabha leaders pointed out that they should struggle against the Muslim fundamentalist. In one leaflet entitled 'Sangram', circulated in the entire district and Calcutta, they showed 'Hindus' were forced to murder one hundred League 'goondas' (hooligans) in revenge for the molestation and rape of the Hindu women. Thus they should continue their struggle for freedom not against the British but also to fight against the Muslim tyranny and thus demanded partition of Bengal. The Hindu Mahasabha observed the All India Independence Day and the anti-Pakistan Day on 10th of May 1942. They followed the ideology of Savarkar to attain Swarajya, the absolute political independence of Hindusthan to preserve the unity and integrity of the nation. In November, 1945, the District Conference of the Hindu Mahasabha was held in Berhampore (Saidabad Kuthibari) and was attended by more than two thousand delegates. Maharajkumar Srish Chandra Nandy opened this conference and N.C.Chatterjee and other leaders of All India Mahasabha attended the conference. According to N.C.Chatterjee⁶¹, "Let us declare today that as the Muslim League persists in its fanatic idea of establishing Pakistan in Bengal, the Hindus of Bengal must constitute a separate province

under a strong national government. This is not a question of partition. It is a question of life and death for us, the Bengali Hindus. Unless you can have an administration of your own choice, you shall be serfs under an anti-Hindu communal regime and you can never get out of the prevailing sense of frustration and defeatism and you can never protect your oppressed brother and sister”. The anti-communal forces tried to create a gulf in the district to infuse communal violence and posed an attitude that the concept of Hindu-Muslim unity in a Muslim majority district like Murshidabad was next to impossible. In Murshidabad among 43.1% of Hindu population, only five petitions demanded the partition of Bengal. So we can rightly conclude that no communal forces could mobilize the masses in the district to engage their mind and soul towards communal violence or partition of the district.

3.4 Incidence of Communal Violence in the District

1. In 1937, a serious clash occurred at Jangipur⁶² between the Hindus and the Muslims in connection with the immersion ceremony of the Hindu deities. The Muslim obstructed an immersion-procession of the Hindus and the incident took a communal turn recorded in the report. The S.D.O of Jangipur issued a standing order on 9th February, 1942 and made a compromise mentioning the terms and conditions of the immersion procession. After this event, communal tension in the district rose high⁶³. But in 1943, the next S.D.O who was a Mohammedan, twisted the previous order in such a way on 27th February, 1943, that the tension mounted high⁶⁴ and as a result during the immersion of the goddess a communal conflict flared up. But it was quickly suppressed by the District Magistrate. It draws the attention of the Ministry⁶⁵ and the Muslim S.D.O was detected for the communal conflict and transferred.

2. In spite of special precautions trouble over Moharrum procession occurred occasionally in a particular area of Murshidabad in 1940. As per as the government report, the most serious incident took place at Kaliaganj⁶⁶ in Murshidabad district, where some of the processionists looted and damaged some Hindu shops. A number of police were injured and the Sub-Deputy Magistrate in charge was compelled to fire as a result of which three Muslims were killed and eleven injured.

3. On occasion of Korbani (slaughtering of cow) during the ‘Bakar Id’ festival at Khidirpur (Suti in Jangipur Sub-Division) a big village under the territorial jurisdiction of the Hariharpara police station⁶⁷, a communal tension was aggravated in 1939, when the Hindu Zamindar Kalachand Roy tortured the poor Muslim peasants. As a result the Muslim tenants

appealed to their Muslim friends for financial help and they attacked Hindu villagers which created communal tension in the area.

4. Dispute over Music before mosque in Nimtita and Aurangabad under Jangipur subdivision of the Murshidabad district is an interesting event of communal tension⁶⁸. Hindus had some local customs and rituals of their own. If therefore a procession from a particular temple has been following a particular route and playing music all along the route, then the local custom must be taken as already well known. But the Muslim erected the mosque on that route which took away the rights of the Hindus following this custom and it appeared to the Hindus to be merely a very serious infringement of a religious observance of one community by members of other community. The District Magistrate at the time, declared that Hindu processions have been allowed to pass along a particular route playing music for a long time and in his view the erection of a mosque on the route makes no difference. Though there was an agreement between the two communities concerned permits music to be played outside the hours of prayer. But the Muslims made an allegation against the Hindus that Hindus were in the habit of passing along a particular route and playing music does not establish a local custom to play music before a mosque. This infuriated the Hindus which created tension in the area. Following this incidence District Magistrate of Murshidabad, Mr. S.Rahmatulla, took a progressive step to lessen the communal tension. Then district magistrate allowed the Hindus to take their religious processions in some other route with music.

5. Some Hindu shops⁶⁹ were looted in Lalgola and Bagawangola area of the district. The hooligans looted the Hindu house and set fire to it. Looting, kidnap of women and murder continued in the district to create communal frenzy atmosphere.

6. Minor clash⁷⁰ occurred in Murshidabad district between Hindu 'goala' (milkman), and Muslim villagers over the question of cattle grazing and slight communal tension aroused from there. In similar fashion communal tension continued at Ahiron (Murshidabad) on issues of cattle rearing. In the meantime, the political situation in Bengal had radically changed. Neither the Congress nor the leftists could comprehend how deeply communalism had spread in towns and villages of Bengal. The results of the election held in the beginning of 1946 clearly showed that the Muslim League headed by Suhrawardy⁷¹ had become the single largest party; it won 115 seats, while the nationalist Muslims got five seats and independent Muslims two seats. In Murshidabad, the nationalist Muslims were defeated by

the Muslim League and suffered a severe set back and gradually faded away. Hence we should mention that the League activists tried to rouse communal sentiment among the Muslims to create consensus for the partition of the nation as we find in the records of pre-partition communal incidence in the district.

4. Radcliff Award and Partition of India (Bengal) in 1947

Radcliff award was the outcome of an official plan announced by Lord Mountbatten on 3rd June, 1947 regarding the partition of India⁷² into two separate sovereign states – India and Pakistan. According to the June 3rd plan, the Bengal Legislative Assembly was to divide itself into two parts, one comprising of the representatives of the Muslim majority districts and the other of the Hindu majority ones. On 20th June these two provisionally partitioned units met to vote on the issue of partition. The majority of the representatives of the Hindu majority districts voted in favor of the partition of Bengal while those of the Muslim majority districts voted against it. On the basis of this vote, the ground for partition was established. Significantly, it was only after this vote that the Boundary Commission was set up to determine the final border between East Bengal and West Bengal⁷³. The partition of India is customarily described in surgical metaphors as an operation, and the new borders created in 1947 are often thought of as incision scars⁷⁴. Partition can be defined as a political game and after decisions of partition were taken, Boundary Commission had been drawn up to cast the real border, on the basis of which power would be transferred to the two dominions.

4.1 Claims and Counter Claims: the Bengal Boundary Commission

Proposals on the basis of claims of Boundary were put before the Bengal Boundary Commission by the Muslim League, the Hindu Mahasabha and the New Bengal Association, the Congress and Jatiya Banga Sangathan Samiti in different ways. At the same time the united Bengal Plan⁷⁵ was launched as a reaction against partition. The extraordinary success of the partition campaign in mobilizing Hindu opinion did not; however mean that it swept all before it. A handful of Hindu politicians, led by Sarat Chandra Bose, made a determined attempt to resist the tide. In January 1946, Bose resigned from the Congress Working Committee. Sarat Bose with the support of Kiran Shankar Roy attempted to come to an eleventh hour agreement with Muslim leaders like Suhrawardy, Abul Hasim for the creation of a ‘United and Sovereign Bengal’ as a solution of the communal problem and to ensure social justice. But most of the League leaders like Jinnah,

Akram Khan, and Khwaja Nazimuddin were not influenced by this proposal and they demand to include Bengal in Pakistan. Due to lack of proper leadership the idea of 'united Bengal' failed to take shape.

The Muslim League

The Muslim League⁷⁶ aimed in extracting as much territory as possible for East Bengal. According to them if a Hindu majority area was not contiguous to any other Hindu majority area in Bengal it should go to East Bengal. On this basis, the League claimed for East Bengal three districts where Muslims were a small majority of the population namely the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri⁷⁷. The League insisted⁷⁸ in giving East Bengal a share of the provincial revenue in proportionate to the share of population in Bengal. On these grounds the league demand for East Bengal the whole of Calcutta urban agglomeration, it also staked its claim to areas of the west of Calcutta where Jute mills, military installations, ordinance factories, railway workshops and lines were located on the ground that these facilities were essential for East Bengal's economy, internal communication and defense. The Muslim League was asking for all the territory east of the Hooghly and Bhagirathi rivers.

[See Map - I -p.476]

The Hindu Mahasabha and the New Bengal

The Hindu Mahasabha members⁷⁹ of the provisional West Bengal Assembly had voted for partition so as to secure a 'homeland' for the Hindus of Bengal and a separate space for the Hindus where the Hindus could determine their own future. They claimed ten Hindu majority districts (Burdwan, Midnapore, Birbhum, Bankura, Howrah, Hooghly, 24 Parganas, Khulna, Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri), they demanded that two entire Muslim majority districts (Malda and Murshidabad), large parts of Nadia, Faridpur and Dinajpur and selected thanas(police station) in Rangur and Rajshahi, be given to West Bengal. This would have given West Bengal roughly 57% of the total area of Bengal⁸⁰.

The New Bengal Association⁸¹ demanded land only for Hindu Bengalis as they are distinct from other race. To fulfill their destiny it was crucial to have enough space for them. New Bengal Association demanded the eastern districts of Barisal and Dacca in particular. They too demanded Jessore and Faridpur to be included in West Bengal, for the inclusion and accommodation of immigrants from Pakistan.

[See Map – II -p. 477]

The Bengal Congress

The Bengal Congress demand a good number of Muslim majority thanas, and whole of Jalpaiguri, Dinajpur Malda, Murshidabad, Bankura, Burdwan, Midnapore, Hooghly, Howrah, Calcutta, Nadia, Jesore Khulna Faridpur and Bakarganj to West Bengal⁸². These territories were demanded by the Congress so that the safety of Calcutta might not get jeopardize.

[See Map - III- p.478]

Jatiya Banga Sangathan Samiti

The Samiti lobbied for the exclusion of the entire Muslim-majority districts of Nadia, Jessore and Murshidabad and also of the Hindu-majority districts of Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling in North Bengali speaking areas of Bihar in the new West Bengal state⁸³. This demand excluded North Bengal⁸⁴ as a frontier region, because of ethnically and culturally distinct from the Bengal heartland. Due to the strategic importance of Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri as a source of revenue earning demands were made for its inclusion in West Bengal.

[See Map - IV – p.479]

4.2 Partition in Case of Murshidabad District

Murshidabad also had a special significance as the site of the headwaters of the Hooghly. It was generally agreed that the survival of Hooghly as a part (and of Calcutta as an entry port of trade) depended on its link with the river Ganges, which flowed through the northern edge of Murshidabad. The representatives of all four Hindu parties⁸⁵ had therefore insisted that Murshidabad be included in West Bengal, although it was a Muslim majority district and were prepared to exchange Khulna, a large Hindu-majority district to the East Bengal. Though the Muslim League leaders wanted the inclusion of the district with East Bengal, the Congress and the Hindu Mahasabha leaders demanded for the inclusion of Murshidabad into the Indian Union; the district leaders⁸⁶ argued before the Boundary Commission in favor of retaining Murshidabad in the Indian Union. Wasif Ali Mirza, the Nawab of Murshidabad Nalinakshya Sanyal, Murtuza Reza Chowdhury, Kazem Ali Mirza,

Shahibzada Kawan Jah Saiyid, and Khuda Bukhsh moved before the Commission also argued for the inclusion of Murshidabad within the Indian Union.

Radcliff Award

The Radcliff Award⁸⁷ was published on 17th August, 1947 two days after the Independence after much speculation. It drew a dividing line between the two parts of Bengal (East and West). The Boundary Commission demarcated after the publication of the Award⁸⁸ -

- a) The whole of the Chittagong and Dacca Division comprising Rangpur, Bogra, Rajshahi, Pabna, and Khulna were assigned to East Bengal.
- b) The whole of Burdwan, Calcutta, 24-Parganas and Murshidabad were given to West Bengal.
- c) The five districts that are Nadia, Jessore, Dinajpur, Jalpaiguri and Malda were distributed between East and West Bengal whereas Nadia, Jalpaiguri, Malda, and parts of Dinajpur were assigned to West Bengal and Jessore and parts of Dinajpur were given to East Bengal. Only two police station of Jessore that is Bongaon and Gaighata were added to 24-Parganas district of West Bengal which comprised 319.8 square miles in area.
- d) In Malda except Bholaghat, Gomastapur, Nachol, Nawabganj and Shibganj, the entire districts were assigned to West Bengal with 596 square miles in area.
- e) Murshidabad district did not loose to East Pakistan any entire police station.
- f) The whole district of Sylhet was transformed from the province of Assam to the new province of East Pakistan, excepting for the four police stations of Patharkandi, Rataleari, Karimganj and Badanpur.

[See Map - V – p. 480]

5. Nature of Post Partition Communal Activities in the District

After partition communal violence was not so frequent in the district compared to other places in West Bengal (Calcutta, Narkaedanga, Amerstreet etc) and in East Bengal (Dacca, Faridpur, Noakhali, Chattagram etc). But we can mention few cases of violence as obtained from police records⁸⁹. The Hindu politicians like Srish Chandra Nandy (Member of Legislative Council of Cossimbazar, Murshidabad), Syamapada Bhattacharya (Member of

Legislative Council of Cossimbazar, Murshidabad), and Nalinakshya Sanyal (president of the District Congress Committee) demanded the inclusion of Murshidabad in East Pakistan and the inclusion of Khulna in West Bengal. Similarly underground and open activities started by the Muslim League leaders for the inclusion of Murshidabad in East Bengal and the tension rose high.

The prominent League leaders of the district⁹⁰ of Muslim League agitators were Abdul Momin (Lalbagh), Abdul Gani (Gorabazar), Abdul Khuda Pramanik and Abdul Rahaman (Bhagabangola), Abdus Samad Moulavi (Lalbagh), Afajuddin Ahmed (Beharampore) was arrested, but the Muslim League supporters⁹¹ tried their best to create communal tension in the district. In Domkol Muslim mob armed with lathis, surkis (knife) in an attempt to cross Jalangi River and attacked the Hindu refugees gathered at Karimpur bazar, but the situation came in control with the firing of the district police. In order to carry the activities of the Muslim League (ML), Kazimuddin Mandal a staunch ML supporter, along with other fellow local ML supporters looted the Lalgola hat (market) of the Hindus and looted the Hindu merchants with the help of the Muslim inhabitants in that area in order to collect money for the activities of ML. The staunch Muslim League supporters even after partition of the district tried to create communal riots in Lalgola and several areas of Murshidabad. They raped Hindu women, plundered their property and set fire to Hindu houses. Official record⁹² showed that the Muslim League leaders like are Mannan Sheikh, Maniruddin Sarkar, Atahar Sarkar, Lokamn Sheikh who killed some influential Hindu businessman and looted the cash, jewelleryes and continued the League activities in the district but were later arrested. Efforts were also made by the Muslim Leaguers to import Muslim refugees from Bihar in the district to settle them there in order to utilize them in creating communal troubles. Muslim students of the district are also reported to have been collecting subscriptions from the Muslim on the definite understanding that the district would be brought back under the Pak dominion.

Some of the leading Muslim Leaguers are reported to be maintaining regular contact with the Muslim League high command of East Pakistan at Dacca. The local league leaders influenced the poor local Muslims of their area to collect information about the internal affairs of the district administration and passed it on to the appropriate quarters at Dacca. Muslim League⁹³ leaders Azizul Hoq, Abdul Hamid, Kazem Ali Mirza, Md.Israil, Md Khuda Bakhsh, Abdul Latif, Syed Baddrudoza, Zahiruddin Biswas, Sakhwat Hossain Alkadari etc. holds secret meetings of Muslims and propagated anti-Indian sentiment among

them in Beldanga. Similar meetings were held in Hariharpara police station, where some league supporters were arrested. In Hariharpara area Abdul Bari (a league supporter), has purchased a radio set where news from Pakistan radio station are received through this set and are listened to by the Muslims. Some Muslims resided in Dhulian, were arrested for carrying arms, pistols, gunpowder, daggers and secret formulae for preparations of explosives for creating communal riots in the district. These leaders also carried smuggling activities across border. The leaders have been systematically carrying on agitation and propaganda among the Muslim masses as a result of which a number of Hindu temples were desecrated and religious ceremonies and procession of Hindus were obstructed by the Muslims in some areas of the district.

The idiom of surgery puts a gloss from the communal tension but border intrusion continued unabated after partition. Surgery is painful and bloody, but it served a purpose – it makes things all right in the end – and the pain of surgery is comprehensible and endurable because of this. By describing the creation of the border in these terms, the violence that was involved in this process has been contained within an acceptable, comprehensive and even meaningful idiom. The surgical, metaphor has thus worked to lend legitimacy and credibility not only to the Radcliff line but to the very idea of partition itself.

5.1 The Border and Everyday Life

Though partition has separated the territorial limits of India and Pakistan, still disputes continued in the char areas. The river Padma, which divided Murshidabad and Rajshahi, became a source of constant trouble from the latter half of 1947. People started inhabiting in these char areas. Biren Mandal lived on Rajnagar char in the Padma River where he faced severe trouble by the border security forces from the Pakistan's side. One of his thatched huts fell in Rajshahi in Pakistan, while the other huts were in Murshidabad in India. According to a police report⁹⁴, both Indian and Pakistani troops periodically 'claimed his allegiance'. According to police report his neighbor Bishnu Pramanik, died in the crossfire while he was crossing the border⁹⁵ for his daily earning.

The lives of the people in the border were disrupted totally. People who lived at some distance from the border found that it disrupted their lives in all sorts of ways. For example, oilcakes, green vegetables, potatoes, brinjals and pulses were grown or produced in the village surrounding Rajshahi towns and these had been supplied by villagers to sell on the Southern bank of the Padma in Murshidabad⁹⁶. After partition, the Padma become the border

and people were not allowed to cross it with commodities. As a result, a whole sub-economy was destroyed. A vegetable grocer named Zahiruddin were shot dead in the firing by police in the border while he crossed the border. A vegetable vendor was beaten up and robbed as he returned from Daulatpur to Jangipur in Murshidabad⁹⁷. And finally, the border separated people from their families. The border also interfered with the customary visits of the son-in law (jamai-babu) to his in-laws on the occasion of Jamai-Shoshti. Kishore Mohan Sarkar⁹⁸ of Jalangi in Murshidabad was arrested while trying to visit his father – in law at Bagwangola. Smuggling⁹⁹ of jute and other food grains and vegetables became prominent in the Bengal borders and as a result price of food grew higher in East Bengal.

In the border areas life of the common people became miserable. Pak intrusion was a common incidence¹⁰⁰ in post-partition days. In Bhagawangola (Murshidabad) police station, in char Kuthibari area, Pak force with the help of local villagers dug trenches to create communal tension in the region. But with the intervention of Indian police illegal intrusion become quite impossible for the Pak citizens. The Pak constables often crossed river Padma and looted the villagers of the char area. They looted crops, foods and domesticated animals even money from the villagers and fled to Pakistan. Even when Indian boats passed through Pakistan water between Bansgara and Majherdiar, constables of Pakistan often looted the Indian boats and the majhis were killed so that they could not launch any complaints against the dacoity. Throughout the border areas intrusions were carried by the Pak nationals and policemen. Report also showed that Muslims living on the border areas Kakmari char¹⁰¹ (Jalangi in Murshidabad district) bear strong pro-Pak leanings. Khayerulla Sarkar, Dr. Khalilur Rahaman and his son Azizur Rahaman, Md. Hossain all hold governmental jobs in Murshidabad, maintained their relation with Pakistan, carried away all the money from local school fund from Murshidabad to Pakistan and did not return the said money to the school committee after several reminders. They even held land and property in Pakistan and supported Pak nationals to carry their misdeed in India's border areas. At regular occasion Pak officials attack the Hindu villagers of the char areas to create communal tension in the district. Muslim mob from Pakistan entered with hasuas, scythes and lathis to fear the local people and carried their atrocities in the villages.

5.2 Incidence of Communal Violence in Post-Partition Era

For Bengal the partition was not just political or territorial but amounted to a mutilation of its rich culture. A large number of people not only lost their homes but bore the trauma of

displacement for the rest of their lives. Marked as refugees they had to fight for survival, left to the mercy of newly emerging state for which they remained as an additional and unwanted burden¹⁰².

1. Pashupati Roy of Chabgati police station, Suti, Murshidabad¹⁰³, when he was returning with his family from in-laws house at Belaghati (Rajshahi) was detained by some Muslim youths. They were confined separately in houses for the night. Pashupati Roy was severely assaulted by the Muslim youths but he managed to escape and reached Nimita, but later on police found the body of his wife and son.

2. Case of Baneswar Mandal was also an incidence of communal violence. On the morning of Bakr-Id day two of the Hindus were directed and forced to go to witness Korbani. In Nimita there was a temple Gourangabari (Shiv temple). Here on the same day some Hindus who were Sebaitis (worshipper of lord Shiva), were called by the Muslims and asked to take beef. They have refused to take beef and the same night all three committed suicide along with their family.

3. From Azimganj ferryghat dead body of Narsingha Kumar Mandal an influential local Hindu businessman was found which created communal tension¹⁰⁴ in the area. The body was embedded in the sandy bed of the Ganges. Arms and ammunitions were received from the house of local Muslim of the same area who were engaged in dacoity in the Hindu houses and murdered them. Later they were arrested which created communal tension in the region.

4. Another incidence of communal friction¹⁰⁵ recorded by Budu Sheikh when he lodged an FIR that some Hindu of their locality set fire to his house while he with other Muslims of his village offered 'go-korbani', in Muslim para in Beldanga. Whereas Babu Ghosh who was charged for the offence in his defence said that the Muslims stole his bullock and slaughtered in their house as a result he had to take similar revenge. Even some Hindus objected korbani in a place duly inhabited by the Hindus. Communal clash occurred between Hindu goala and a Muslim over the question of cattle grazing and slight communal tension arose in Ahiron (Suti). The tension arose so high that the two parties had to settle the incidence in court.

5. In Mangalpur bazar in the Nimita or Aurangabad¹⁰⁶ (Jangipur subdivisional town), there were a plot of land on the roadside recorded as mosque in settlement records, but no

mosque was standing on the plot, then District Magistrate of Murshidabad (Mr. S. Rahmatulla), allowed the Hindus to take their religious processions with music. Hindus had some local customs, rituals of their own and established long processions following the usual route. But the Muslim erected the mosque in that route took away the rights of the Hindus performing the festival. Hindus took it as a serious infringement of a religious observance of one community by members of other community. The then DM declared that Hindu processions have been allowed to pass along a particular route playing music for a long time and in his view the erection of a mosque on the route makes no difference. Though there was an agreement between the two communities concerned permits music to be played outside the hours of prayer. But the Muslims made allegations against the Hindus.

Communal identities are necessarily constructed around specifically religious (or sacred) symbols such as the issue of music before mosque and communal tension arose in Suti of the Jangipur sub-division between the two communities. Post partition communal tension arose in Nimtita in Bangasabati village under Suti police station centering round the immersion of the Raj-Rajeswari Deity and before that religious procession with music throughout the village. The issue of music before mosque, go-korbani (cow slaughter) or cow protection caused communal clashes after partition but the situation did not took the form of riot but it created mistrust within the two community. Before the situation took violent turn it was controlled with the intervention of police force (DIG of police) to restore communal harmony in the district.

5.3 Reasons behind Insignificant Occurances of Communal Violence in the District

The official records that are available confirmed that communal violence in the district were few and insignificant compared to other places such as in Calcutta. Rafiuddin Ahmed demonstrated that political violence (riots) was mainly initiated by the leaders of the society, and where these leaders were successful in mobilizing the masses riots and violent communal clashes happened, whereas the places where solidarity¹⁰⁷ between the two community was institutionalized the picture was different and there were less incidents of communal violence, as in Murshidabad, Birbhum, Midnapore and Burdwan¹⁰⁸. The main cause of riots in Bengal was economic grievances of the Muslim masses, the political mobilization of Muslim masses by the League and sectarian differences (identity consciousness of the Muslims of Bengali origin) within the community members.

1. Identity Consciousness of the Bengali Muslims

Muslims of non-Bengali origin had a relatively more distinct communal and religious identity (example Calcutta) whereas in case of Murshidabad, the Bengali Muslim community lacked that identity. Due to inner-alienation and differentiation between the ashrafs (Muslims of noble class) and atraps (degraded Muslims) within the community of Muslims¹⁰⁹ (Ashraf and Atrap), there was no viable identity consciousness among Bengali Muslims, and thus they were more integrated with society they lived and had a friendly relationship with their Hindu compatriots with whom they shared a common pattern of rural life. Most of the Muslims of Murshidabad are Bengali so they are often questioned by the non-Bengali Muslims (Ashrafs) whether they are Bengalis or Muslims. So the identity of the Bengali Muslims has often been challenged as most of them (Muslims) in the district are converted Muslims, belong to low class mainly agricultural labor, illiterate and poor. Muslims of Calcutta who were rich and well educated distinct from the Bengali Muslims in culture and norms were totally alienated from the society and possessed a sense of distinctiveness¹¹⁰ (Muslimness) from others (Hindus and Bengali Muslims) in the society. Thus often clashes occurred in Calcutta (example- the great Calcutta Killings of 1946) due to this kind of alienation of non-Bengali Muslims from the rest of the society. But in Murshidabad the Bengali Muslims were fully integrated with Bengali culture and this helped to develop a sense of communal harmony which restricted them from undertaking violent activities. On the issue of Pakistan when Md. Ali Zinnah declared, "Riot is a legal action and tried to motivate the Muslim masses for communal violence against the non-Muslims the Muslim League leaders of the district like Kazem Ali Mirza, Farhad Murtuza Reza Choudhury; Abdul Hamid tried their best to create communal violence. The leaders like Maulavi Abdus Samad, Rejaul Karim and the nawab Wasif Ali Mirza played an important role in restoring communal harmony within the community members. Thus communal politics failed to create the gulf within the two communities. Rafiuddin Ahmed demonstrates the growth of solidarity in Bengali Muslim society especially in Murshidabad district due to impact of Bakhti and Sufi cultural tend¹¹¹. Thus the district tended to be an exception where occurrences of communal violence were insignificant.

2. Socio-Economic Inequality

Suranjan Das viewed communalism¹¹² as an organized form of violence created by both Hindu and Muslim politicians to seek their self interests. Socio-economic inequality¹¹³ is one of the causes of riots in rural areas, example the case of East Bengal such as in Noakhali, Pabna, Tippera, Pabna, Mymensingh, Bogra, Backerganj and Chattagong. Here

the Muslim peasants were exploited by the Hindu zamindars who exploited the tenants who suffered from insecurity. Muslim peasantry had to meet the burden of Zamindari officials in Puja or other occasions such as marriages or births in the Zamindar's families. Money-lenders also imposed additional subscriptions such as 'Iswar Britti' for the upkeep of Hindu idols. Thus naturally riots broke out against the Hindu zamindars when the poor Muslim masses were completely mobilized by the political leaders of the community.

The existence or non-existence of civic ties within the community members is the primary cause of outbreak of conflict or riots. According to Ashutosh Varshney¹¹⁴, where such networks of civic engagement existed, tensions and conflicts are regulated and managed, where they are missing, communal identities lead to endemic and ghastly violence. Varshney further analyzed that engagement of both the community in associational forms promoted inter-communal peace. According to Paul Brass¹¹⁵, communal riots are a myth that is riots are organized and produced by a network of known persons in the area. Most of the rioters are devoted to the cult of violence for the protection of their own community. But in case of Murshidabad, in spite of the efforts taken by the Muslim Leaguers in creating communal violence, the solidarity or associational ties between the two communities prevented the outbreak of riots in the district.

The scholars like Ranajit Guha and Partha Chatterjee analyzed the character of the Bengali Muslims as subaltern¹¹⁶ that is class devoid of any responsiveness. They were so indifferent of their socio-economic status that they were less vulgar towards creating any communal tension. The community both Hindu and the Muslims are mainly not affluent class, they even did not possessed land for their survival, and lead their life as sharecroppers so, being economically deprived both the community lived in co-operation with each other to earn daily livelihood. They possessed good ties among them and hence did not think of creating violence against each other. Hence the league activist in the district neither in pre or post partition era could motivate the Muslims of the district to engage in communal clashes.

5.4 Attitude of the People of the District in Post Partition Era

After partition, the political situation changed in the district. Most of the Muslim League leaders left for Pakistan and those who remain in Murshidabad most of them merged with Congress party for their security of life and property. Similarly Hindu Mahasabha leadership too lost their relevance and merged with congress. After achieving independence

mighty waves of enthusiasm swept over the district, entire population took part in the national celebrations of Independence Day. The surging tide of consciousness born of the newly gained freedom broke all barriers between Hindus and Muslims, so long artificially separated from one another and every man and woman behaved magnificently in the friendliest possible co-operation to make the celebration worthy of a proud Indian.

When independence day were celebrated in 15th August, 1947 by hoisting their own national flag in India and Pakistan after achieving their dream land Pakistan for Muslims and Hindustan for Hindus, two district in West Bengal (India) were exception (Murshidabad and Khulna) that is Murshidabad were included in Pakistan and Khulna in India as declared by government in the midnight of 14th August 1947. In 15th August independence day¹¹⁷ were celebrated in Murshidabad by hoisting Pakistani flag in Barrack Square field. All influential citizens of Berhampore assembled in Barrack Square like Shyamapada Bhattacharjee, Maulavi Ekramul Hoque and delivered speeches explaining independence of India, usefulness of unity among Hindu and Muslims and exhorted people to give up killing and to live in peace with each other under the state banner. Maharaja of Quasimbazar, Raja Kamala Ranjan Roy, the then District Magistrate of Beharampore and more than three thousand persons attended the meeting in the auspicious day of independence. The Muslim community expressed their happiness and excitement by achieving their dream land Pakistan even more than from achieving freedom from foreign domination. Flag were hoisted¹¹⁸ in Kashiswari Girl's School, in Kanchantala zamindar's residence by a section of Muslim. Among the Muslim community who were vociferously¹¹⁹ supported for the inclusion of the district in Murshidabad under the leadership of Kazem Ali Mirza engaged in communal activities in some places like Hariharpara, Jangipur, Aurangabad, Suti, Islampur, Bhabta, Beldanga but their efforts failed to create communal tension with the active co-operation of the intellectual class of the district belong to both the community.

But in the midnight of 17th August, 1947, it was declared that due to geographical reasons Murshidabad will be included as the part of India and Khulna will be given to Pakistan. In the morning of 18th August again Indian flag were hoisted in Beharampore Barrack Square field by the then DM I.R.Khan. The meetings were organized with the presence of Congress, RSP and CPI leaders and all the members of independent India rememorized the selfless dedication of the freedom fighters of the district. No evidence of riots¹²⁰ was traced out but communal tension at this time rose high among the Muslim population of the district. Prior to partition on 18th August a procession organized by

Muslim League demanded the alteration of partition scheme that is reinclusion of Murshidabad with Pakistan. Similarly from Dhulian and Jangipur a procession came to Khagraghat station organized by Muslim League but the then police super N.C. Sen brought the situation in control and the infuriated mass failed to enter Beharapmore town and returned to their home again. Public meetings were held in Beharapmore Square field to celebrate Independence Day in 21st August, 1947 after the inclusion of the district with India. The celebration concluded with national song sung by Kumari Mamata Saha followed by light refreshments and distribution of holy books. Public meetings were held at Beharapmore K.N.College campus area at 3pm on August 21st 1947 and several nationalistic speeches were delivered for the restoration of Hindu-Muslim unity after so many dark days. To lessen the communal¹²¹ stress the local leaders like Abdul Gani, police commissioner Amiruddin Khan, student leader of K.N.College Barin Ghosh, Lutfal Hoq of Aurangabad, and Tarapada Saha of Beldanga palyed a positive role as a progressive leader of the district during this time. The slogan of the Muslim League leaders, “Larke Lenge Pakistan” (that is we will fight up to the end to achieve Pakistan) failed to polute the environment of the district. Just after partition when communal tension rose high in every parts of West Bengal, in Dhulian (Murshidabad district), the headmaster of Kanchantala High School Hemanta Roy with the help of Muslim Moulavis and Muslim students and his colleague Nasibullah Saheb, Md. Razibullah tried to maintain and developed a feeling of communal harmony among the student and non-teaching members of the school. In 1948 during the eve of Holi¹²² in the district in Jangipur many Muslim shops were destroyed but with the initiative of the then DM Ananda Shankar Roy, the situation soon came in control and once again communal harmony restored in the district.

Rejaul Karim in his speeches tried to assure that all citizens are equal in free India. He said, “We must work out the partition of India in a spirit of peace and co-operation and should eliminate our disputes and differences with the spirit of reasonableness”. Wasif Ali Mirza commented that the interest of the minorities will be safeguarded and there would be no interference to their religion, faith, their life their property and their culture. They will be treated in all respect as Indian citizens without any discrimination. To celebrate Hindu-Muslim unity¹²³ on the occasion of id festival Wasif Ali Mirza a leading Muslim of the district entertained the Hindus of the area with sweets and drink. By eliminating all communal fervour¹²⁴ Rejaul Karim translated the proposal of Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and ensured that not only the Muslims, but the Hindus are also maltreated in this communal

tension, they too lost their homes, property and lost their lives. Minority is not a problem, he said communal friction is most vulgar which hampered country's peace and ushered communal tension. The Hindus and Muslims both have achieved their free homeland; they both possessed individual identity and actively participated in the administration of the country. Karim argued that Indian culture had been shared by both the community members and they considered them as Indian citizen. The district of Murshidabad with its Muslim majority witnessed less number of communal riots compared to other places of West Bengal especially in Calcutta and other parts of West Bengal and India. Here lays the exceptionality of the district its long tradition of Hindu Muslim unity which prevailed from the days of the Nawabs till today.

6. Population Migration from the District

The partition of Bengal entailed large exodus of people in human history. According to the official report 3.5 million Hindus migrated from East Pakistan to India, while only 500,000 Muslims crossed border from West Bengal to East Pakistan, although it was Muslims (from all over India) who demanded a separate Muslim state and created Pakistan¹²⁵. The influx of Hindu refugees created crisis of land and food in West Bengal lasting more than three decades. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee was the creator of the state now called West Bengal. He carved out West Bengal from the then East Pakistan and East Punjab from West Pakistan. Likewise all the Muslim dominated districts of Punjab renamed as West Pakistan went to Pakistan, and the Hindu - Sikh dominated districts were included in the Indian union as a new state, called East Punjab. The only Muslim majority district that was included into West Bengal, due to geographical reasons, was Murshidabad. And for the similar reason, the Hindu dominated district Khulna was included into East Pakistan.

Table-4.1

Change of Demography in West Bengal and Murshidabad

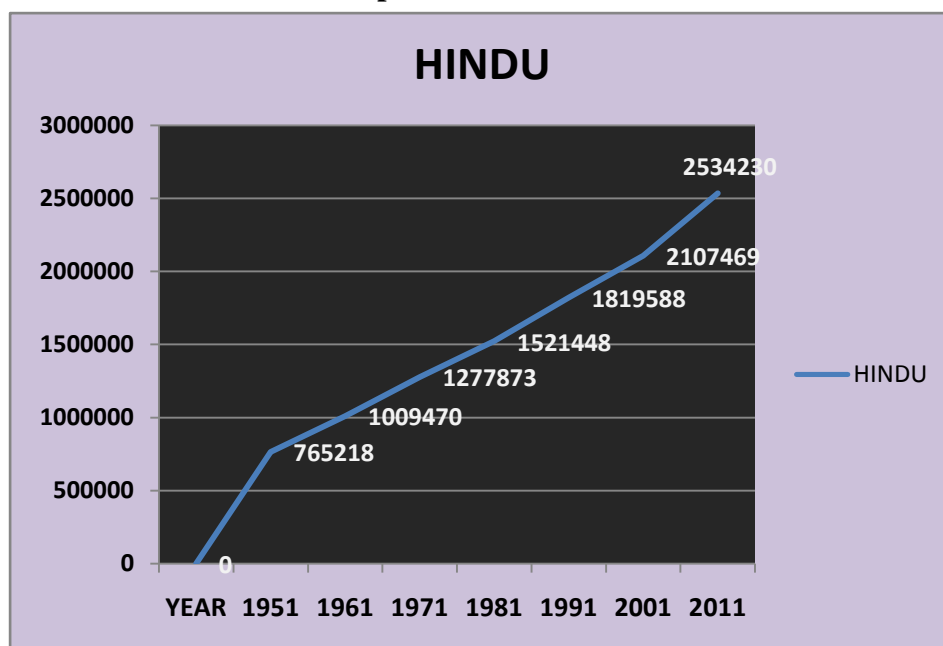
Area	Year	Hindu	Decreased	Muslim	Increased
	1951	78.45	-5.98	19.85	5.4
West Bengal	2001	72.47		25.25	
Murshidabad	1951	44.6	-8.68	55.24	8.43
	2001	35.12		63.67	

(Source: - Census of India- 1991, 2001)

In the following Table-4.1 the change of demography is traced out in West Bengal and Murshidabad that is after partition the increase and decrease of population (Hindus and Muslims). Within the span of time between the years 1951-2001 Hindu population from 78.45 % has come down to 72.47 % in 2001. At the same time Muslim population in 1951 were 19.85 percent which has increased to 25.25 percent in 2001. Similarly in case of Murshidabad the Hindu population has decreased from 44.6% to 35.12% and Muslim population has increased from 55.24% to 63.67%. The table shows the rise of Muslim population in overall West Bengal and in Murshidabad in compare to the decline in Hindu population in West Bengal and in Murshidabad district.

Figure-4.1

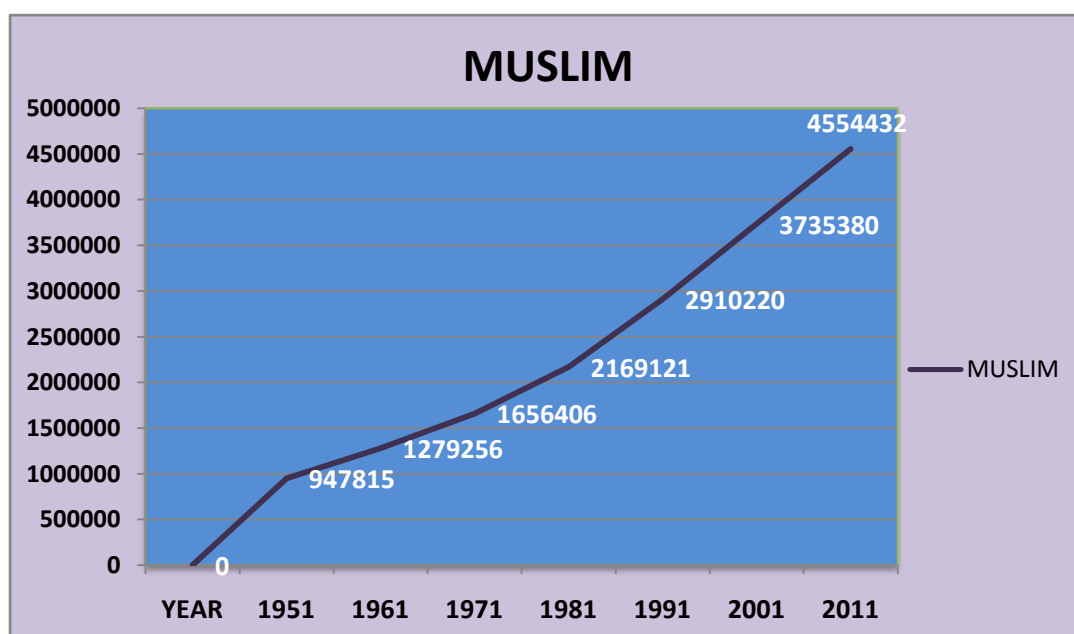
Variations of Hindu Population in the District of Murshidabad



(Source:-Census Report -1951, 1961, 1971, 1981, 1991, 2001, 2011)

Figure -4.2

Variations of Muslim Population in the District of Murshidabad



(Source:-Census Report -1951, 1961, 1971, 1981, 1991, 2001, 2011)

The above figure 4.1 and 4.2 shows the increase of the Muslim population in the district of Murshidabad and decrease in the Hindu population from the year 1951-2011 after partition. The increase in the Muslim population may be due to the following reasons -

- i) Planned and deliberate rejection of family planning measures by the Muslims.
- ii) The uncontrolled influx of illegal Bangladeshi Muslim infiltrators through the porous Indo-Bangladesh border.
- iii) Through conversion of (religion) Hindus and to Islam.

In the year, 1931, number of Hindus in the district were 589551 (43.01%) and number of Muslims were 761582 (55.56%) and others were 19544 (1.42%) out of the total population of 1370677 (taken as 100%) in the district.

In the year, 1941 number of Hindus in the district were 684,987 (41.75%) and number of Muslims were 927,747 (56.55%) and others were 27796 (1.69%) out of the total population of 1640530 (taken as 100%) in the district.

In the year 1951, number of Hindus in the district were 765,218 (44.60%) and that of Muslims were 947,815 (55.24%) and others were 2,726 (0.16%) out of the total population of 1,715,759 (taken as 100%) in the district.

In the year 1961, number of Hindus in the district was 1009470 (44.1%) and that of Muslims were 1279256 (55.87%) and others were 701 (0.03%) out of the total population of 2289427 (taken as 100%) in the district.

In the year 1971, number of Hindus in the district were 12,77,873 (43.46%) and that of Muslims were 16,56,406 (56.33%) and others were 5925 (0.21%) out of the total population of 29,38,713 (taken as 100%) in the district.

In the year 1981, number of Hindus in the district were 1521448 (41.15%) and that of Muslims were 2169121 (58.67%) and others were 6983 (0.18%) out of the total population of 3697552 (taken as 100%) in the district.

In the year 1991, numbers of Hindus in the district were 1819588 (38.39%) and that of Muslims were 2910220 (61.40%) and others were 10341 (0.21%) out of the total population of 4740149 (taken as 100%) in the district.

In the year 2001, number of Hindus in the district were 2107469 (35.92%) and number of Muslims were 3735380 (63.67%) and others were 23720 (0.41%) out of the total population of 5866569 (taken as 100%) in the district.

In the year 2011, number of Hindus in the district were 25, 34,230 (35%) and number of Muslims were 455, 4432 (64%) and others were 13768 (1%) out of the total population of 7102430 (taken as 100%) in the district.

The figure above 4.1 and 4.2 (by comparing the census report from 1931-2011 respectively) shows the percentage of decade variations of Hindu and Muslim population in the district.

Table - 4. 2

Percentage of Decade Variations of Hindu Population in Murshidabad

Year	Hindu Population	Percentage of Decade Variation of population
1931	589551 (43.01%)	-
1941	684987 (41.75%)	1931-1941 (-1.26%)
1951	765218 (44.60%)	1941-1951 (+2.85%)
1961	1009470 (44.1%)	1951-1961 (-0.5%)
1971	12, 77,873 (43.46%)	1961-1971 (-0.64%)
1981	1521448 (41.15%)	1971-1981 (-2.31%)
1991	1819588 (38.39%)	1981-1991 (-2.76%)
2001	2107469 (35.92%)	1991-2001 (-2.47%)
2011	2534230(35.68%)	2001-2011(-0.24%)

(Source:-Census Report -1951, 1961, 1971, 1981, 1991, 2001, 2011)

Table 4.2 respectively shows the decline of Hindu population in the district from 1931-2011, with the exception of the year 1951 which shows the increase of Hindu population by 2.85% in the district as a result of migration from East Pakistan to West Bengal (Murshidabad).

Table – 4.3

Percentage of Decade Variations of Muslim Population in Murshidabad

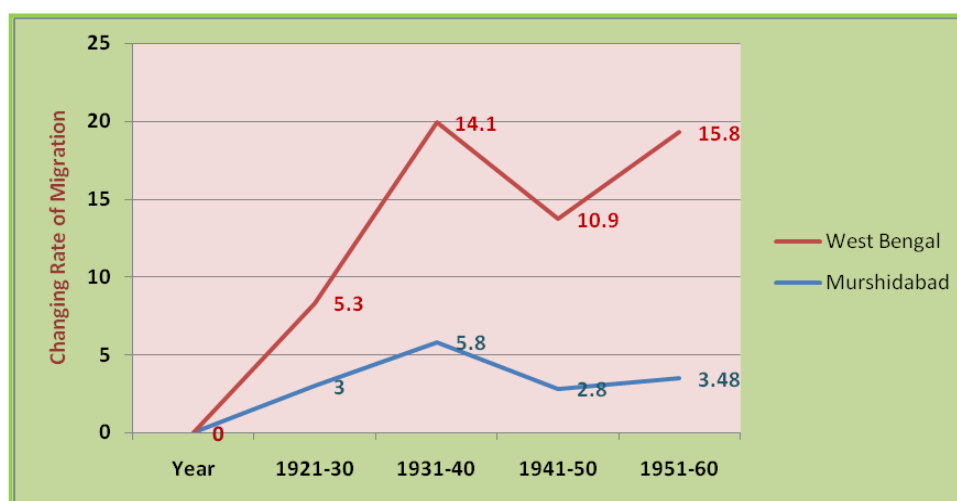
Year	Muslim Population	Percentage of Decade Variation of population
1931	761582 (55.56%)	
1941	927747 (56.55%)	1931-1941 (+0.99%)
1951	947,815 (55.24%)	1941-1951 (-1%)
1961	1279256 (55.87%)	1951-1961 (+0.63%)
1971	1656406 (56.33%)	1961-1971 (+0.46%)
1981	2169121 (58.67%)	1971-1981 (+2.34%)
1991	2910220 (61.40%)	1981-1991 (+2.73%)
2001	3735380 (63.67%)	1991-2001 (+2.27%)
2011	4554432(64.12%)	2001-2011(0.45%)

(Source:-Census Report -1951, 1961, 1971, 1981, 1991, 2001, 2011)

Table 4.3 shows the gradual increase of Muslim population in the district from 1931-2011. Hence in compare table 4.2 with 4.3 we can infer that communal tension after partition (1951 census report), result in considerable emigration of Muslim population and immigration of Hindu population in the district. All these result in the sharp decline of population in the district. The 1951-1961 decade is characterized as the decade of population explosion in India. There is the rise in the district population in 1961 from what it was in 1951 or in other words, the district population increases at the rate of 3.34%.

Figure - 4.3

Migration Rate of Total Population in West Bengal and Murshidabad

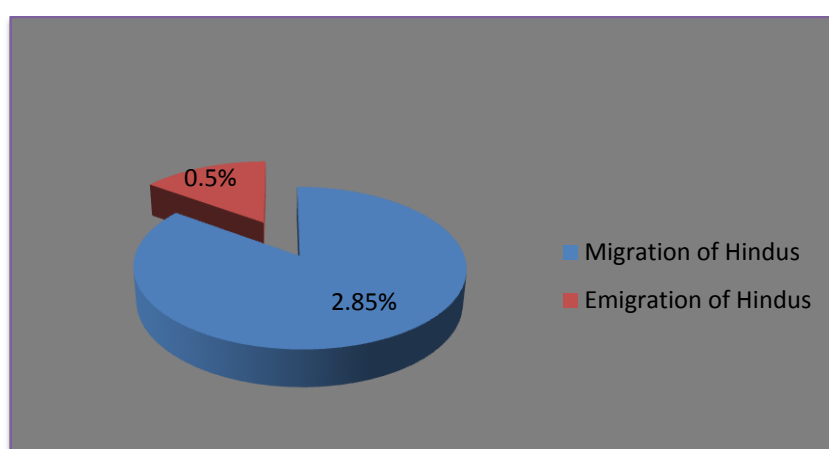


(Source:-Census Report -1981, Series 23 West Bengal Part V - A&B Migration Tables)

The above figure- 4.3 shows the rate of refugee influx to the district and overall West Bengal. Maximum migration occurred in the years from 1951-1960 after partition in Murshidabad compared to previous years. From the table it shows that 3.48% of population (inflow of population from Pakistan) enters in the district while the overall influx was 15.8% in West Bengal. Only 1.81% (outflow of population) of population left the district within the years between and 1951-1960.

Figure – 4.4

Migration Rate of the Hindus in the District

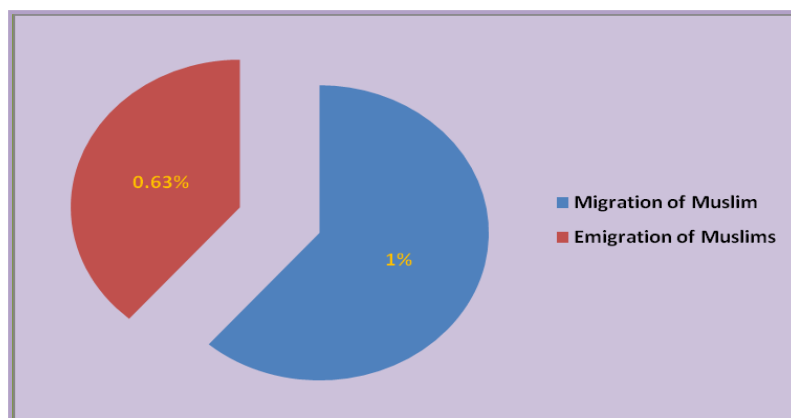


(Source:-Census Report -1981, Series 23 West Bengal Part V-A&B Migration Tables)

The above figure- 4.4 shows that migration of Hindu population to the district is about 2.85% from East Bengal to West Bengal whereas the data shows (census report of 1951-1961) the emigration of the Hindu population (outflow) is 0.5% from West Bengal to East Bengal.

Figure- 4.5

Migration Rate of the Muslims in the District

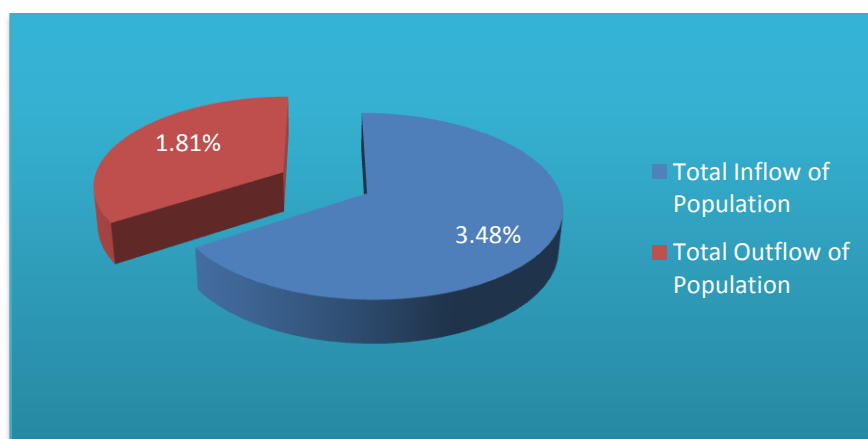


(Source:-Census Report -1981, Series 23 West Bengal Part V- A&B Migration Tables)

Figure- 4.5 similarly shows that from 1951-1961 migration of Muslims is only 1% that is inflow of population from East Bengal to Murshidabad whereas 0.63% of population is emigrated (outflow) from West Bengal to East Bengal.

Figure -4.6

Total Influx of Population in Murshidabad District



(Source:-Census Report -1951, 1961&1981, Series 23)

Overall in the above figure-4.6, the data shows that out of the total population in the district 3.48% is the inflow of the population from Pakistan to Murshidabad district and 1.81% of the people is migrated to Pakistan from Murshidabad district in between the year 1951-1961.

Migration has always played a very minor part in the fluctuation of population in the district. According to 1961 census report, 93.3% of the total populations of the district were of district origin, after partition 3.48% of the total district population came as refugees from the erstwhile state of East Pakistan after the state came into existence. The growth rate of population in the district was the result of growth in birth rate and not for migration alone. Other reasons for the increase in the growth of population were due to greater Hinduization, increase of the tribal and Christian population in the district.

Evicted by violent communal¹²⁶ attacks, in Calcutta a small section of Muslims decided to migrate to East Pakistan quite willingly. Certain categories of government employees were given the choice to opt for either India or Pakistan. People mainly the governmental employees from the Muslim majority districts of Murshidabad, Malda, and Nadia who thought that these districts would naturally go to Pakistan after the final settlement settled down in Rajshahi from Murshidabad because of its proximity to Murshidabad. The middle class population migrated to East Bengal for ideological commitment as well as better career prospect. The migration of the educated Muslim middle class created a vacuum¹²⁷ in the social, cultural and political leadership. In case of Murshidabad district, violence, riots, anti-communal feeling compare to other parts of West Bengal, was negligible thus migration rate was less in this district than other places of West Bengal.

7. Conclusion

The inwardness of partition cannot be fully understood through a study of the motives of those in Delhi and in London who put the priorities of India and empire above the interests of Bengal. Nor do investigations into Muslim separatism tell the whole story. Partition, at least in one important province, was the considered choice of large and powerful sections of the Hindu population. Partition is generally believed to have been a consequence of a separatist politics of Muslim minorities, but in the case of Bengal, Hindus evolved a parallel separatism of their own. In Bengal, the Congress (Murshidabad) campaigned successfully for the vivisection of its province on communal lines. The United Bengal Plan is given as evidence that Bengalis actively fought against a second partition. But this version is far from the truth. Religious differences and culture was deployed as a mark of difference with the two communities rather than evidence of traditional unity in the district. The intellectual Bengali class actually fought for the partition which gave them a separate homeland of their

own. Partition was not imposed by the centre on an unwilling province. The Bengali leaders of the district who develop more parochial culture, narrow self-interests are more virulently communal, supported partition of the subcontinent in the floor of the Legislative Assembly.

The researcher found traces of communal tension and rare incidence of violent activities in the district. Due to porous border various Pak intrusions in Indian Territory continued unabated. Moreover we find that post partition communal tension remain active while the Muslim League supporters through various means tried to create gulf a within the two communities in the district which to some extent could not last long as the people of the district pose an anti-communal attitude. This is true that some incidence of riots, looting, burning of houses destruction of shops, murder of innocent people was traced out from the governmental sources along with the border disputes. But the incidence of riots was not as vigorous as we find in Dhaka, Calcutta killings and riots in other parts of India after partition. Partition was no doubt a political outfit but it changed mode of people's life and their relations to some extent especially the people resided in the char area which was considered as no man's land. But the people of the district shared a common tradition of maintaining communal harmony in the district and hence several steps taken by the Leaguers turned futile. Partition syndrome created an imaginative idea of minority complex among the Indian Muslims which to some extent felt its impact on the minds and psyche of the Bengali Muslims of the district too. The leaders of the district tried to remove this minority syndrome so that the Muslims could integrate with Indian society without any ill-feeling or hatred towards the other communities in the district concerned. It may also infer that the political leaders possess both pro and anti communal-attitude towards the newly created province of Pakistan which is visible through several instances. But apparently it may be concluded that Murshidabad's long history of communal harmony and socio-economic status of the Bengali Muslims and the calculative steps taken by the political leaders were the potent reasons of not out breaking of severe riots in the district – and the district remain as an icon of maintaining communal harmony even today.

Notes and References

1. Barbara Metcalf speaks of her wonder at having approached..... The core of what has given the Islamic tradition its resilience throughout time and places of such increasing diversity. She insists not only that there is one Islam (the teachings of Islam are one) but that there is a general term 'adab' shared widely in Muslim society both by Bengali speaking and non-Bengali Muslims in the society at large

Metcalf Barbara Dally, 'Introduction', in Metcalf Barbara Dally ed. (2007), *India's Muslims*, Delhi, Oxford University Press Publication, pp.12-13

2. According to R. Ahmed, there are certain basic tenets of faith that characterize Islam, that Bengali Muslims for the most part, were semiliterate with a bare knowledge of the rudiments of Islam, their faith was dominated by the un-Islamic practices such as pir worship and idolatry and that despite a century of reformist efforts they are very little closer to seeing the light today. Inevitable for Ahmed, there was something curiously self contradictory in the Muslim masses quest for an Islamic identity.

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7. *ibid.* pp.131-34

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13. Sarkar Jadunath, (1973), *History of Bengal*, Patna, Cambridge South Asian Studies Pub, pp.105-119

14. Khan Mohammad Mohsin, (1973), *A Bengal District in Transition, Murshidabad (1765-1793)*, Dhaka, The Asiatic Society of Bangladesh Pub. Pp.1-10

15. Government of West Bengal, (1979), *West Bengal District Gazetteers: Murshidabad*, Calcutta, Government of West Bengal Pub. Pp.12-15

16. Murshid Quli Khan himself a Hindu convert sought to proselytize by force, one of his regulations being that any Hindu Zamindar who failed to pay his revenue or make up the arrears due should be compelled to embrace Islam with his entire family.

Ibid pp.20-26

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